

California Department of Veterans Affairs



NEWS RELEASE

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STATE AND COUNTY REACH AGREEMENT ON CALIFORNIA'S FIRST STATE VETERANS CEMETERY

SACRAMENTO – April 7, 2004 – As part of Governor Schwarzenegger's ongoing commitment to California Veterans, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Thomas Johnson announced today that the State had entered into a memorandum of understanding with Shasta County relative to the on-going maintenance costs of the Northern California State Veterans Cemetery scheduled for completion by the end of 2005. The unanimous 5 to 0 vote by the Shasta County Board of Supervisors to approve this maintenance agreement with the State was the final hurdle before construction could begin on the cemetery.

"I am pleased that the California Department of Veterans Affairs and Shasta County have reached an agreement to ensure that the Northern California State Veterans Cemetery gets built and operated for generations to come according to this agreement," said Johnson. "California veterans deserve nothing less than the peace of mind of knowing they will be buried close to their loved ones."

The proposed veterans cemetery, to be located on land donated to the state near the community of Igo, in Shasta County, is a shared project between the state and the United State Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). The USDVA will now move forward with providing California with a grant for the construction of this cemetery, which the State will own and operate. While the State will provide for the overall management of the cemetery, including staff, equipment, and most utilities, Shasta County will jointly maintain the cemetery by providing inmate or volunteer labor to perform landscaping and other maintenance necessary, as well as also providing \$7,500 per fiscal year for water charges.

"Years of ground work by local veterans, the Shasta County Board of Supervisors, State Legislators, and the California Department of Veterans Affairs have finally made the Northern California State Veterans Cemetery a reality," said Johnson. "This cemetery, which is the first of its kind in California, is the result of hard work and commitment to veterans by the Shasta County Board of Supervisors and Administrative Officer Doug Latimer, Senator Sam Aanestad, Assembly member Doug LaMalfa, local veterans organizations, and Governor Schwarzenegger. The Northern California State Veterans Cemetery is a testament to what can be achieved when all interested parties work in the spirit of cooperation, understanding, and commitment."

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Construction should take slightly more than a year to complete. Final plans, including the required environmental reports, have been approved by the state and the USDVA will complete their final review in anticipation of awarding a grant to fund the project this year.

The State Cemetery Grants Program was established in 1978 to complement the National Cemetery Administration. The program assists states in providing gravesites for veterans in those areas where USDVA's national cemeteries cannot fully satisfy their burial needs.

The USDVA may provide up to 100 percent of the development cost for an approved project, including operating equipment. The USDVA does not provide for acquisition of land. The construction of the NCSVC will be provided by a federal grant in the amount of \$7 million, which will also cover the costs of design, development and equipment.

The USDVA's National Cemetery Administration is also in the process of establishing a new federal veterans cemetery near Dixon, California. According to Anthony J. Principi, Secretary for the USDVA, the acquisition of the land for that cemetery is progressing well and construction funding for the first phase of the Dixon cemetery is included in the president's budget for fiscal year 2005.